

IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims now pending; this listing replaces all earlier versions and listings of the claims.

Claim 1 (currently amended): A color-image processing apparatus comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used by said determination means for determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data is read from ~~said~~ the image storage means at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means, and

wherein said determination means adds determination-completed flag information to each piece of the color image data that has been subjected to determination.

Claim 2 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said color-image processing apparatus comprises a computer, and wherein the image storage means comprises a hard disk.

Claim 3 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the color image data is stored in the image storage means as a file.

Claim 4 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising alteration means for performing alteration of the color-image data when said determination means determines that the color image data coincides with the pattern.

Claim 5 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the image storage means and said determination means are controlled by an operating system on a computer, and wherein the operating system periodically controls said determination means to perform determination on the color image data stored in the image storage means.

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim ~~[[6]]~~ 1, wherein said determination means does not determine the similarity with respect to the color image data having determination-completed flag information.

Claim 8 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said determination means determines the similarity when application software executed on a computer reads the color image data from the storage image means.

Claim 9 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when an operation input from an operator is not provided for a predetermined period.

Claim 10 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when a CPU (central processing unit) of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute application software.

Claim 11 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when said color-image processing apparatus is turned on.

Claim 12 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the color image data from an external storage device to the image storage means.

Claim 13 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the color image data from the image storage means to an external storage device.

Claim 14 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination during communication of the

color image data with an external apparatus connected to said color-image processing apparatus via a network.

Claim 15 (currently amended): A[[n]] color-image processing apparatus according to claim 3 comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used by said determination means for determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data is read from the image storage means at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means,

wherein the color image data is stored in the image storage means as a file, and

wherein said determination means performs a determination by obtaining bit-map data other than data buried within the image file in a format of a tag.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A[[n]] color-image processing apparatus according to claim 10 comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used by said determination means for determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data is read from the image storage means at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means,

wherein said determination means performs a determination when an operation input from an operator is not provided for a predetermined period, and

wherein, when another operation input from the operator is not provided for a predetermined period after starting an operation input from the operator, said determination means resumes determination processing for the color image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claim 17 (currently amended): (currently amended): A[[n]] color-image processing apparatus according to claim 10 comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used by said determination means for determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data is read from the image storage means at a predetermined time which is independent of

a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means,

wherein said determination means performs a determination when a CPU (central processing unit) of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute application software, and

wherein, when the CPU of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute the application software after starting execution of the application software, said determination means resumes determination processing for the color image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claims 18 - 21 (canceled)